

"Ut omnes unum sint."

THE ANNUAL CALL OF THE Church Unity Octave

In collaboration with the C.U.O. Committee in America

EIGHT DAYS OF PRAYER FOR REUNION — 1955

From the Feast of St. Peter's Chair at Rome, January 18th, to the Feast of the Conversion of St. Paul the Apostle of the Nations, January 25th.

"I in them and thou in me, that they may be perfected into one: that the world may know that thou didst send me and lovedst them even as thou lovedst me."

—S. John xvii, 23.

It is only by the reunion of all Christians into the Visible Kingdom of Christ, preserved in Unity by the Chair of St. Peter, the central See of Christendom at Rome, that the will of Our Lord can be fulfilled and that the power of the Church can be directed, without the present waste and rivalry, to the conversion of the whole world by the One Faith to Christ our King.

Prayer for Christian Unity is a costing business. Anyone therefore who responds to this Annual Call must recognize to what he is committed. It is to nothing less than the declared Will of God for the ordering of His Church. When we pray in the name of Christ we are not trying to move Almighty God to endorse our preconceived ideas as to what we may think to be true or even best for His Church. On the contrary, we are engaged in a strenuous spiritual exercise directed to the acceptance of the Cross for ourselves. We are seeking grace to bend our ways and wills to the declared Mind of Christ. And this kind of prayer, it may be, will cut across our preconceptions. In this matter of Catholic Unity what is being demanded of Christians is a readiness to submit their theological assumptions no less than their denominational convictions to the Divine scrutiny. It is only by the light of the Holy Spirit that we shall see our way back to unity.

When we contemplate the problems presented to our minds by the manifold divisions in Christendom a feeling of hopelessness sometimes comes over us. For these divisions express diverse and often diametrically opposed doctrines of Authority and Unity. How can there be any visible unity of a disintegrated Christendom apart from doctrinal agreement on the nature of the Church, her Authority and her Faith? Such visible unity must express an inner unity if it is to fulfil the High Priestly prayer of our Lord. Indeed so confounding is the prospect presented to our minds by the divisions among Christians that the temptation is to despair of any ultimate solution.

Anglican Catholics in particular have special reasons for recognizing this situation. In so far as an Anglican is led to believe in the Church's supernatural character as the "One Body and the one Spirit" ("built upon the foundation of the Apostles") he must contemplate the theological confusions in the Church of England as daunting.

Surely the first task resting upon an Anglican must be to work and pray for doctrinal unity within the fold of Anglicanism itself. There can be no hope of a reconciliation between Canterbury and Rome until this goal has been reached. One has only to recall the differences that always arise in any theological discussion among Anglican priests to realize the difficulties that confront us. One of the direct results of this is that Catholics in the Church of England find themselves in almost complete isolation not only from the centre of unity in the See of Rome but also from their fellow Anglicans.

How can these barriers be broken down? Only by common prayer in which we seek not only our will but the Will of God. In the Church Unity Octave an opportunity is provided for all who own the name of Christ to enter with His Mind for the ordering and government of His Church.

But candour compels one to confess that Catholics claim to know already **with certainty** something of the Mind of Christ regarding the outward ordering of the Church. This conviction is theirs because they have grasped the truth by an act of **faith in a Divine Revelation**. This is not one of those propositions which Catholics would propound to their fellow Christians as merely an enlightened opinion, or as the probably true interpretation of Scripture and Tradition. On the contrary, they have apprehended the Faith—or rather have themselves been apprehended by the Faith—as a coherent unity. This wholeness or Catholicity of belief is something that embraces the Divine Authority which Christ bestowed upon His Apostles and their successors. They believe that just as the Apostles must continue in the Episcopate throughout history, so too must the foundation Rock endure around which the Apostles of the Lamb gather as the foundation stones. They cannot understand why the Church of England, which has always made so much of the "historic Episcopate" as one of the necessary conditions in any scheme for reunion, is so indifferent to the office and place of Peter in the Apostolic College, that college from which Episcopacy is derived. It seems to them that Papacy and Episcopacy stand or fall together, not united as the one indivisible Apostolate created by Christ.

We have indeed a long way to go in the Church of England before this basic fact is frankly recognized. Fears, prejudices, inherited inhibitions, theological rationalization in justification of a separatist position—all these and other barriers, which the devil or man has erected, rise up to hinder the reintegration of a torn and dismembered Christendom. But with God nothing is impossible, if only we who are members of His mystical Body will bring all these difficulties into the open and re-examine our assumptions in the light of the Holy Spirit. Then a new hope would arise and the day of reconciliation would be near at hand.

This Annual Call to prayer for Unity would undoubtedly touch the deeper springs of devotion and dedication if we implored the aid of the Blessed Mother of God who is also the Mother of the Mystical Body. So much prayer to Our Lady is sheer sentimentality. But to pray to Mary as the Mother of the faithful is to stand with Her at the foot of the Cross. A sword must pierce our hearts as well. Surely Her Heart must be riven as she contemplates the divisions of Her Son's family. She would gather Her children around Her if only they would turn to Her to help forward the reconciliation of the Church.

The essential requirements for Unity have ever remained in the Church. They have not been lost. The work of reconciliation is God's work not man's. It is therefore essential that prayer and submissiveness to God should be demanded of us. When Christ returns in visible power and glory to claim the Kingdom, the whole Mystical Body will enter into that unity which is agreeable to the Mind of Christ. Meanwhile His servants are called upon to prepare the way of the Parousia by removing such obstacles as have been created by human pride, self will and ignorance. The Blessed Grignon de Montfort who lived nearly 200 years ago and who possessed the gift of prophecy declared that in the latter days before the return of Christ there would be a great revival of devotion to Our Lady.* He believed that just as Mary made possible Our Lord's first coming into the world so would She be the means of His second coming. We can hasten the coming of Christ, and in no respect can we hasten forward that glorious event more speedily than by a sincere and filial devotion to Mary the Mother of us all who own the name of Christ.

* The words above concerning the need of the help of our Lady's intercession have special appeal in view of the dedication of this year by the Holy Father to Mary.

Some years ago the Octave was placed under the invocation of Our Lady of Walsingham.

THE DOGMATIC POSITION OF THE CHURCH UNITY OCTAVE Council is summarised in the following statements:—

- (1) The conversion of the world depends upon the Visible Unity of the Church of God, for our Saviour prayed, "That they all may be one . . . that the World may believe."
- (2) He provided the means for the maintenance of this Unity by the appointment of a visible head of the visible Body: "Thou art Peter, and upon this Rock I will build My Church." History has shown what interpretation the Church has given to this text, for none other has ever been the Church's acknowledged head upon the earth but he who sits on Peter's Throne. Separation from this centre of Unity has always led the separated into further schisms, while acknowledgment of it by all must necessarily result in the healing of all divisions.
- (3) The dogmatic decrees that concern the supremacy of St. Peter's successor and his infallibility in Faith and Morals, while not capable of being rescinded even by the Pope himself, do nevertheless admit of elucidation and further definition such as would make their general acceptance by the Catholic-minded inevitable.
- (4) Further, it may be hoped that many vital and important matters left over at the Vatican Council, such as those concerning the mystical nature of the Church, will eventually be considered and issue in such definitions as may bring out the true balance of the doctrine concerning the relationship between the successor of St. Peter and the rest of the Apostolic Episcopate and the body of the Faithful.

It is to these statements or "Premisses" that we invite all priests to send in their signatures as giving "entire support."

All who support this Octave of PRAYER in this critical time for the English Church are urged to offer if possible Mass daily for its intention.

To join in any local observance that may be organized, and in public intercessions.

To make it known and to obtain the Call and other Octave literature from Mr. Elderton for distribution to friends.

DAILY INTENTIONS

- Jan. 18.—**St. Peter's Chair at Rome.** The return of all the "other sheep" to the "One flock, under one Shepherd."
- „ 19.—Reunion of the Eastern and Western Churches.
- „ 20.—The repairing of the 16th century breach between England and Rome.
- „ 21.—The return of Lutheran and other European Protestants to Holy Church.
- „ 22.—The return of all dissenters to Holy Church.
- „ 23.—The return to the Holy Sacraments of lapsed Catholics.
- „ 24.—The Conversion of the Jews and Moslems.
- „ 25.—**Conversion of St. Paul.** The Missionary conquest of the whole world for Christ the King.

CHURCH UNITY OCTAVE PAPERS

	each	per doz.		
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The Annual Call for 1955	4d.	2	6	post free
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Reprint of Tractate No. 8. **What are We to Say?**

1. By the Rev. H. J. Fynes-Clinton. 1s. each.
2. By the Rev. W. Robert Corbould. 1s. each.

The Pilot and Tractates can be obtained from Miss Mary Hall,
151, Carshalton Park Road, Carshalton, Surrey.

“**Reunion**”: published by the Confraternity of Unity.

Half-yearly. Minimum Subscription: 3/6 per annum, which must be sent to the Secretary (Mr. Lawrence E. Jack, 11, Sandringham Close, Enfield, Middlesex) by January 31st each year.